



Cumbria, Northumberland,  
Tyne and Wear  
NHS Foundation Trust

# Information for adults who were abused as children

Easy read information





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**A member of staff or a carer can support you to read this booklet. They will be able to answer any questions that you have.**

**It can be upsetting to think about abuse, please look at this information with a healthcare worker.**

### **About this leaflet**

- This leaflet is for people who were abused when they were young.
- It will talk about you how you might feel.
- It will tell you where you can go to get help.

## What is child abuse?



Child abuse can mean a lot of different things:

- neglect
- emotional neglect
- physical abuse
- sexual abuse

It is not always easy to know if you have been abused.

The important things to remember are:

- no one has the right to hurt you
- no one has the right to make you do things you don't want to do

## Who could abuse somebody when they were a child?



A member of your family could have been an abuser. This could have been a mother, father, brother, sister or any other family member.



A friend could have abused you.



A neighbour could have abused you.



It could be somebody you know or it could be a stranger.

**Anybody can be an abuser!**

## What are the different types of abuse?



### **Neglect**

This is when a parent or carer doesn't give their child the basic things they need to be happy, healthy and safe.

It might be things like:

- leaving a child alone
- leaving a child with someone who can't look after them properly
- not making sure they have enough food
- not looking after them when they are poorly
- not getting help when they are hurt
- not keeping them clean and tidy



### **Emotional Neglect**

This is when parents or carers don't show kindness or love to their children.

It might seem that the parents or carers are not very interested in their children.



## Sexual Abuse

This means when a child is tricked or forced into any kind of sexual activity

This can be:



- being made to have sex
- having their private parts touched or being touched in a way that makes them feel uncomfortable
- being made to touch other people's private parts
- being made to watch films or TV programmes about sex that they don't want to see
- being made to watch other people have sex or touch each other in a sexual way

Sexual abuse can happen to anyone, boys or girls.

## Verbal abuse

Can be things like:

- being called names
- being threatened
- being punished a lot



## Physical Abuse

This means when a child is hurt by their parent or carer. This can be things like being:

- punched
- hit
- kicked
- burned
- bitten
- thrown



## How abuse can make you feel

Being abused is an awful thing to happen to anyone.

It makes everyone feel different.

You might:

- push it to the back of your mind and not think about it
- forget parts of your childhood when bad things were happening to you
- remember feeling sad or lonely when you were a child, but not really remember being abused
- blame yourself for what happened
- tell yourself it was not so bad
- make an excuse for the person who abused you



The next page might help you understand more about abuse and the effect it can have on you.

## What do children sometimes do when they are being abused?



Children who are being abused might change the way they behave at home or at school.

Some of the changes that might happen are:

- eating differently – not eating enough or too much, or making themselves sick
- wetting the bed or themselves
- getting angry or throwing tantrums
- not wanting to be with their friends or family
- having problems at school – playing truant and being naughty
- feeling scared or have nightmares
- hurting themselves or start drinking alcohol or using drugs
- being unwell a lot or have bruises or cuts



These things don't always mean a child has been abused.

## What happens to abused children as they grow up?



People who were abused as children might find some parts of life harder, things like.

- Trusting people
- Making relationships work
- Being frightened of other people touching them, or having sex
- Having a relationship with people who abuse them
- Having a relationship with someone who doesn't treat them well or with respect
- Feeling worthless or no good
- Feeling that no one will be able to love them
- Having mood swings – where they go from feeling good to very depressed in a short space of time
- Being frightened of things
- Having nightmares
- Being angry with people or feeling guilty
- Having problems with food – they might eat too much or not enough
- Hurting themselves on purpose
- Trying to kill themselves
- Using drugs or drinking lots of alcohol

## How can I start to get over what has happened to me?



The first thing you should do is make sure you are safe.

If you answer yes to any of these, you should talk to your doctor, nurse, support worker or someone you trust straight away.

- Do you think about hurting yourself?
- Does someone close to you hurt or threaten you?
- Have you tried to kill yourself?
- Do you find yourself in unsafe situations?
- Do you have bad thoughts or bad memories?



### Relationships

Think about your relationships with other people.

- Do people take advantage of you?
- Do you feel like you are always looking after other people?
- Do people close to you hurt you?



Make sure that your rights are heard too. You might need to start saying no to people and make sure that you look after yourself.

You might need to think about how to stop the situation you are in. If someone is hurting you, you might need to stop the relationship or change it to make sure you are safe.



If you feel that you are worthless or no one cares about you, you should write a list or draw a picture of all of the good things about yourself. Remind yourself every day of these things.

If you get angry or depressed you could try some ways of calming yourself down until you feel better.

You could:

- do something relaxing like listening to music or watching your favourite TV programme
- go for a walk or do some exercise
- call a friend
- take up a hobby



If you have nightmares or memories of the abuse that come into your head, you could try writing or drawing your thoughts. If you do this each time it happens, they should start going away.



Remind yourself that you are an adult and you are safe and that no one can hurt you now.



You can always go and talk to your doctor or nurse if nothing seems to work.

## Where to get more help

If you would like to get more help or information, you can get in touch with these people:



### **Mind Infoline**

Help, information and support.  
Telephone: 0300 123 3393  
Email: [info@mind.org.uk](mailto:info@mind.org.uk)  
[www.mind.org.uk](http://www.mind.org.uk)



### **Rethink**

Information and help for anyone who has mental health problems.  
Advice Service: 0808 801 0525  
Email: [advice@rethink.org](mailto:advice@rethink.org)  
[www.rethink.org](http://www.rethink.org)



### **SAFELINE**

Information and support to people who were abused.  
Telephone: 01926 402 498  
[www.safeline.org.uk](http://www.safeline.org.uk)



### **Samaritans**

Support for people in a crisis.  
Telephone: 116 123  
Email: [jo@samaritans.org](mailto:jo@samaritans.org)  
[www.samaritans.org](http://www.samaritans.org)



### **Victim Support**

Help and advice for people who have had a trauma.  
Telephone: 08 08 16 89 111  
Text Relay: 18001 08 08 16 89 111  
[www.victimsupport.org.uk](http://www.victimsupport.org.uk)



You can also get help and information from your doctor or nurse.





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Adapted from Abuse - A Self Help Guide written by Lorna Cameron and Dr Lesley Maunder. [www.cntw.nhs.uk/selfhelp](http://www.cntw.nhs.uk/selfhelp)

Further information about the content, reference sources or production of this leaflet can be obtained from the Patient Information Centre. If you would like to tell us what you think about this leaflet please get in touch.

This information can be made available in a range of formats on request (eg Braille, audio, larger print, BSL or other languages). Please contact the Patient Information Centre Tel: 0191 246 7288

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